

PALM COAST'S ORIGINAL YACHT CLUB

Opened December 1972

by Kathy M. Reichard-Ellavsky, Palm Coast Historical Society



Champagne flowed freely at the grand opening of Palm Coast's original Yacht Club in December 1972. International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) completed its main recreational amenity just in time for Christmas and welcomed Santa Claus at the event. The facility included a marina, boat ramp, swimming pool, and tennis courts along the main

canal leading to the Intracoastal Waterway just east of the original Welcome Center. Constructed at a cost of \$600,000 the clubhouse would become the social, civic, and religious hub of the new community for years to come.

Archive photos of the exterior of the building suggest a Polynesian-style roofline popular during that period. Interior photos of the

lounge show groupings of rattan fan-back chairs and low-slung sofas. There was a game area with pool tables and card tables set against a backdrop of natural coquina rock walls and wood ceilings.

Nearly 200 residents moved into their new homes built by ITT/Levitt, one of the international conglomerate's many subsidiaries,

beginning in January 1972. Palm Coast “pioneers” enjoyed an affordable country club lifestyle. The first nine-holes of the original course, now called Palm Harbor, had been completed in September 1971. The final nine holes would open in September 1973.

Early Palm Coast resident Rolland Schmucker currently lives in the same house he and his wife Bea occupied in December 1972. They paid \$29,500 for the four bedroom home with a single car garage attached by a breezeway. Complimentary for the first five years was a lavish buffet available at the Yacht Club every Friday night. “They served soup, sandwiches, and even shrimp. But they eventually stopped that when one of the residents continued to show up with take-out containers,” he recalled.

With no other restaurants or even a grocery store around for at least 11 miles residents had to pack coolers and drive down sandy roads through pine covered swamp to purchase basic essentials. One can only imagine what motion picture and television star Barbara Britton must have thought of the remote community when she arrived that year to film a commercial about Palm Coast. There were no streetlights in all of Flagler County. The only two stoplights were on Rte. 100, one in Bunnell and the other in Flagler Beach.

While extensive recreational amenities are what drew early



Aerial view of original Palm Coast Yacht Club

residents to Palm Coast many were focused on more than leisure. Twenty concerned citizens formally organized the Palm Coast Civic Association in July 1972.

The goal was to promote ideas and programs to ITT’s Community Development Corporation with the intention of making Palm Coast “the ideal place to live.”

In 1973 fourteen clergy of an interdenominational planning group met to coordinate plans for meeting the religious needs of the community.

Resident clergyman Reverend Marcus Otterbein instituted Protestant Sunday Services at the Yacht Club. Mother Seton Catholic Church and Temple Beth Shalom likewise began holding services.

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Entrance and lounge at original Palm Coast Yacht Club

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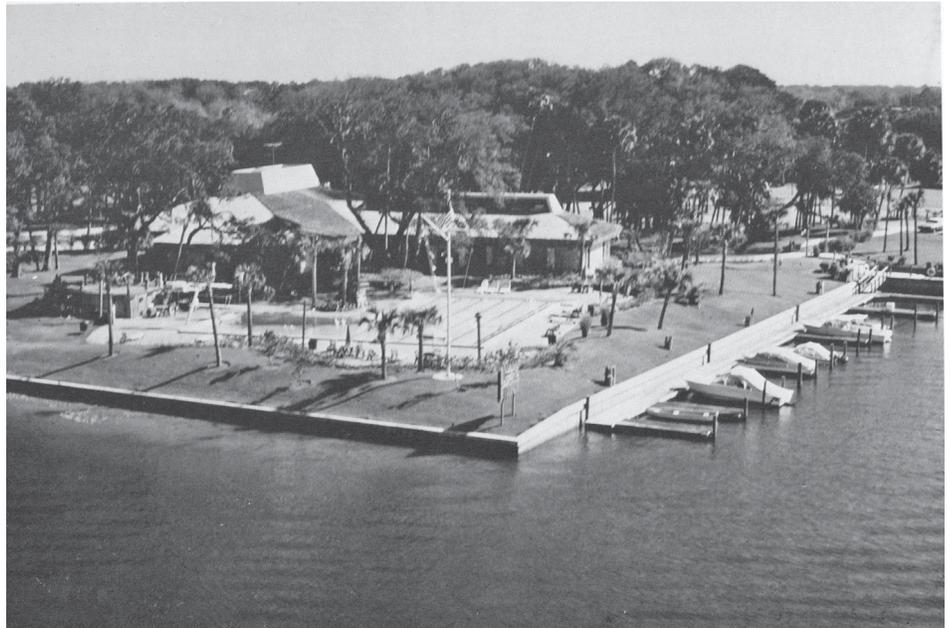
Improvements continued that year with the construction of a new playground, basketball, shuffleboard and climbing units. The dock area received a small open air pavilion with a raised deck. ITT continued to promote Palm Coast with television commercials featuring celebrities like John Forsythe who visited with a film crew.

With each year the community reached another milestone. Sheraton, another ITT subsidiary, opened the Palm Coast Resort on the oceanside in 1974 to attract more potential buyers with “stay and play” packages.

By 1986 ITT transformed the Yacht Club into a second Sheraton Palm Coast Resort along the Intracoastal shoreline. Long gone were the Free Friday Night Buffets but the new Harborside Inn periodically offered \$1 beer and hot dog refreshments in the outdoor pavilion.

By 1994 ITT began selling its Palm Coast assets. The original Palm Harbor Golf Course along with the original Palm Coast Yacht Club/Sheraton were sold in 1996 and managed by Destination Hotels and Resorts. Nearly a decade later the properties were sold to Centex Destination Properties.

Centex demolished both the golf course clubhouse and the yacht club/Sheraton with the intention of redesigning both properties. The ambitious project was to include a combination of



Aerial view of Palm Coast Yacht Club and swimming pool



Recreation room at Yacht Club

condominiums, golf clubhouse, and hotel convention center. Due to a major economic downturn the entire project was halted in 2007. Only one eight-story condominium building with an adjacent parking garage were completed.

Today the site of the original Yacht Club, once the hub of all Palm Coast social, civic, recreational, and religious activity

remains a vacant lot awaiting future use.

Visit the Palm Coast Historical Society and Museum in person in Holland Park to view a recently completed mural illustrating bygone images of our City's early days. Photos and artifacts from another era are on display in the museum. For more information visit www.palmcoasthistory.org and follow us on Facebook.